

Robert Frost's Pencil Pines

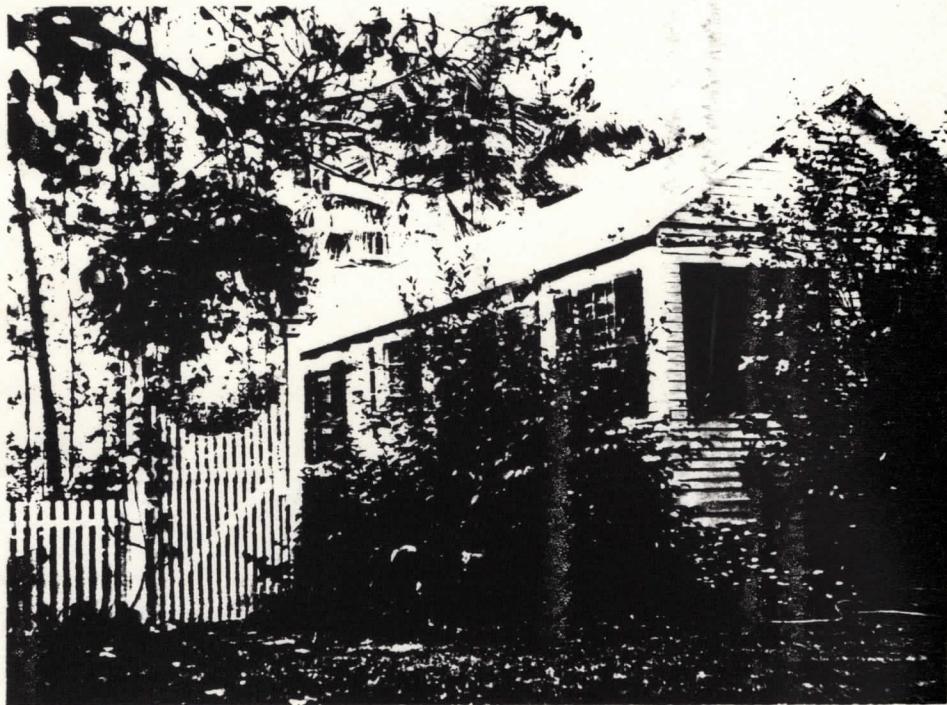
Here in the quiet and solitude
Frost was embraced by every mood;
As inspiration filled his mind
And soul to share with all mankind.

He penned his poems in slow longhand,
They flowed for all to understand;
In world of words, Frost loved so much,
He never lost the common touch.

Frost voice echoed through Pencil Pines
Where in his mind he birthed his lines;
He penned them on plain fools cap,
Then he would take his mud noon nap.

Two cottages enhance rural scene
Were painted white, aquamarine;
The poets spirit resides here,
It permeates the atmosphere.

Gene Griener



Robert Frost wintered at Pencil Pines in South Miami for 23 years. Left, a copy of a poem written by Gene Griener, who crusaded to designate Pencil Pines historic.

PENCIL PINES

by Kellar Mitchell

IT looks like a writer should live there. Not a brash, whiskey-slugging teller of tales. Nor a cosmopolitan author of sophisticated novels. It should be a writer with a sense of the artist.

The two frame cottages look at each other across an untended garden. The picket fence that once joined them has crumbled.

This is "Pencil Pines," the winter home of Robert Frost: Miamian.

That is not an image that comes into focus easily.

While developers, entertainers, politicians and football coaches have been immortalized in our commemorative infrastructure, one of Miami's most famous residents has been virtually ignored.

By the time Robert Frost was named America's poet laureate in 1949, he had been wintering in Miami for ten years.

After the death of his wife Elinor in 1938, Frost found solace and refuge at

the South Miami sanctuary of his friend, author Hervey Allen.

South Florida's winters agreed with Frost. He continued visiting Allen and looked around for suitable property on which to build his own tropical residence.

By January, 1942, two prefabricated New England cottages that, no doubt, reminded him of his New Hampshire home, had been assembled on his five-acre tract of land at 8101 SW 53rd Avenue.

He wrote to his daughter, Lesley, of his new retreat, "The three-room house is already almost too pretty to abandon. The two-room house, exactly twenty-five feet across a grassy and flowery court from it, is comfortable and convenient."

Two houses? Of course, Frost often explained, one for reading and writing, the other for sleeping. In his spare time, he had "three or four oranges, two or three grapefruit, one mango, two loquat, two calamondin and one

banana to water."

Frost continued wintering at Pencil Pines through 1962. He was a familiar figure in the Coconut Grove library, would stroll along the streets visiting with Grove merchants, and each Friday would purchase fish from Mr. Chasen.

The location of "Pencil Pines" also allowed Frost to continue his affiliation with the University of Miami, where he lectured and gave readings at the Winter Institute of Literature.

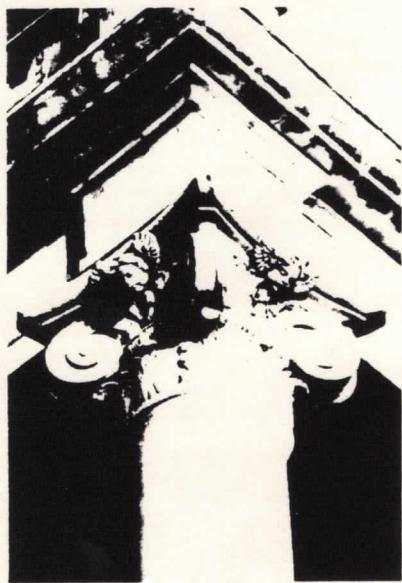
His presence in Dade County has scarcely been recognized. In 1961, the University awarded him an honorary Doctorate of Letters in appreciation of his contributions.

Oh, there have been the polite proclamations from mayors and governors. There even was a proposal to name part of the S.R. 112 Airport Expressway in Frost's memory. Someone realized it was hardly a suitable monument.

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Board recently designated "Pencil Pines" a county landmark. (Hervey Allen's nearby study is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.) But the location and private ownership of Frost's cottages do not lend to a suitable memorial for the poet. Some thought has been given to moving the cottages to a more accessible location.

Frost spent his last winter at "Pencil Pines" in 1962. He spent the time proofreading a volume of poetry that was to be titled *The Great Misgiving*. Instead, Frost looked around his tropical glade and called the book *In The Clearing*.

Robert Frost, New England poet, died the following year.

The white cottages with the bright green shutters have been painted pink now. The dirt road to "Pencil Pines" seems to disappear in the overgrown yard. But the estate remains essentially as it was the last time Frost bade farewell to Miami.

Kellar Mitchell is a free-lance writer.



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